R E P O R T R E S U M E S

ED 014 461 SP 001 359

AN EXPLORATION OF A CLINICAL PROFESSOR APPROACH TO METHODS INSTRUCTION.

BY- DUFFY, GERALD G. PUTT, ROBERT C.

PUB DATE NOV 67

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.25 HC-$0.28 5P.

DESCRIPTORS- *CLINICAL PROFESSORS, COLLEGE TEACHERS, *COOPERATING TEACHERS, *ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS, METHODS COURSES, METHODS TEACHERS, PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT, PROGRAM EVALUATION, QUESTIONNAIRES, SOCIAL STUDIES, *STUDENT TEACHERS, TABLES (DATA), STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE IN FREDONIA, CONANT

TO DETERMINE WHETHER COLLEGE PROFESSORS CAN USE THE CLINICAL PROFESSOR APPROACH IN TEACHING METHODS CLASSES, TWO INSTRUCTORS AT THE STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE IN FREDONIA, NEW YORK, TAUGHT SOCIAL STUDIES EACH DAY TO A SPECIFIC GROUP OF SIXTH GRADE CHILDREN IN THE COLLEGE CAMPUS SCHOOL. THEY CONCURRENTLY TAUGHT A METHODS COURSE IN THE TEACHING OF SOCIAL STUDIES TO SPECIFIC GROUPS OF COLLEGE JUNIORS WHO ALSO REGULARLY OBSERVED THEIR INSTRUCTORS TEACHING THE GRADE SCHOOL CHILDREN. QUESTIONNAIRES ASKED (1) THE COLLEGE STUDENTS TO EVALUATE THE APPROACH, (2) THE REACTION TO THE PROGRAM OF COOPERATING TEACHERS UNDER WHOM THE COLLEGE JUNIORS WERE STUDENT TEACHING, (3) THE SUBJECTIVE REACTIONS OF THE TWO INSTRUCTORS. NINETY-ONE PERCENT OF THE STUDENTS FELT THAT THE COURSES WERE MORE EFFECTIVE BECAUSE THEIR INSTRUCTORS WERE PRACTICING ELEMENTARY TEACHERS WHILE EIGHTY-THREE PERCENT STATED THAT THESE COURSES WERE MORE EFFECTIVE THAN THEIR OTHER METHODS COURSES. OF THE 32 COOPERATING TEACHERS WHO RESPONDED, 20 THOUGHT THE APPROACH HAD GREAT POTENTIAL, 11 CONSIDERED IT NO DIFFERENT FROM USUAL METHODS COURSES, 1 THOUGHT IT POORER. WHILE THE INSTRUCTORS WERE GENERALLY FAVORABLE, THEY SAW DIFFICULTIES IN TERMS OF TEACHING LOAD AND THE ACADEMIC STATUS OF THE CLINICAL PROFESSOR. IT WAS FELT THAT SUCH PROBLEMS MUST BE RESOLVED AND THE APPROACH PURSUED. THIS ARTICLE APPEARED IN PEABODY JOURNAL OF EDUCATION, VOLUME 45, NO. 3, NOV. 1967. (RP)

01359

I 600

ED014461

An Exploration Of a Clinical Professor Approach to Methods Instruction

GERALD G. DUFFY
Michigan State University
East Lansing

ROBERT C. PUTT
Mansfield State College
Mansfield, Pennsylvania

Many of the attacks on American education are directed at the "methods courses" required of students in our teacher-training institutions. The substance of much of the criticism is that methods courses in education are too generalized, too nebulous, and too frequently taught in an impractical manner by instructors far removed from the reality of the classroom. Typical of such criticism is that voiced by Lemons:

> In my opinion, there is a distressing gap between what is taught in the education courses and the real world of teaching. There are classes that are poorly taught by instructors who are either not sufficiently experienced or have been too long away from the classroom situation.[1]

The available evidence indicates that others share this view. Goodlad has stated:

> The continued teaching of methods courses divorced from the classroom or its stimulated likeness is a malpractice which we can ill afford to perpetuate.[2]

Various recommendations have been made by the many critics of methods courses. These have ranged from Koerner's suggestion that existing teacher-training institutions be closed,[3] to Conant's recommendation that methods courses be taught by "clinical professors."[4] It was the "clinical professor" suggestion which served as the basis for this study.

A clinical professor, as defined in this study, is a college professor who continues to teach in the elementary classroom while providing instruction in "how to teach" in college methods courses. It was felt that the college instructors' daily involvement with children in a real teaching-learning situation would result in specific, practical, and realistic methods instruction.

PROCEDURES

To determine whether college professors of methods courses can effectively utilize the clinical professor approach, two instructors at the State University College in Fredonia, New

Peabody Journal of Education, Vol. 45, No. 3, Nov. 1967

York assumed the role of clinical professors for the 1966-67 academic year. Each instructor's responsibility included the teaching of social studies each day to a specific group of sixth grade children in the college Campus School as well as the teaching of social studies methods courses to specific groups of college juniors. The instructors' teaching in the sixth grades was planned to facilitate observation by the students enrolled in their methods courses. Hence, the students in the methods courses received instruction in "how to teach" from an instructor whom they observed regularly in the elementary classroom. It was intended that the immediate demonstration of theories and techniques discussed in the methods courses would not only encourage the instructors to be realistic and practical in their lectures, but would also help the college students to narrow the gap between theory and the real world of classroom teaching.

Specifically, the study was designed to explore the following:

1. The potential of a clinical professor approach for developing greater understanding and teaching competency on the part of undergraduate elementary education majors enrolled in a methods course.
2. The practicality of having college professors of methods courses serve as clinical professors.

Evaluative instruments were constructed and utilized to determine whether or not the clinical professor approach warranted a more intensive study on a structured, experimental level. The evaluative techniques were:

1. A Student Questionnaire in which the students enrolled in the clinical professors' courses were asked to react to the approach.
2. A Questionnaire for Public School Teachers in which cooperating teachers, under whose supervision the college students were doing part-time practice teaching, were asked to react to the approach on the basis of the work the college students were doing in their classrooms.
3. A subjective evaluation by the two participating instructors in which strengths and weaknesses of the approach were identified.

RESULTS

Tabulation of the data collected from the Student Questionnaire indicated that the 180 students enrolled in the courses reacted very favorably on every criterion to the clinical professor approach. (See Table 1). The response concerning the strengthening of confidence was less enthusiastic than other responses, a fact which the students attributed to the fear that they might not be able to achieve a level of teaching skill comparable to that which they observed in their instructors' elementary teaching.

Additional data collected from the Student Questionnaires provided further evidence of the students' favorable reactions to the clinical professor approach:

1. Ninety-one percent indicated that having a practicing elementary teacher as a methods instructor contributed greatly to the effectiveness of the courses.
2. Eighty-three percent indicated that the courses were more effective than most of their other methods courses because the instructors were practicing elementary school teachers.

TABLE I

Student Reaction to the Clinical Professor Approach to Methods Instruction*

CRITERIA	EFFECTIVENESS OF THE COURSES IN TERMS OF PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT			EFFECTIVENESS OF THE COURSES IN COMPARISON TO OTHER METHODS COURSES		
	Yes	In Limited Way	No	Better	Same	Poorer
THE COURSE WAS GENERALLY EFFECTIVE IN PREPARING STUDENTS TO BE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS	152	20	1	156	13	2
THE COURSE STIMULATED INTEREST IN TEACHING AS A PROFESSION	145	24	5	137	28	3
THE COURSE STRENGTHENED CONFIDENCE AS A PROSPECTIVE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER	98	66	10	109	53	4
THE COURSE HELPED STUDENTS SEE HOW THE PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING APPLY TO CLASSROOM TEACHING	157	16	0	134	32	0
THE COURSE SUCCEEDED IN RELATING THEORY TO PRACTICE	154	22	2	132	35	0
THE COURSE REVEALED THE IMPORTANCE OF METHODOLOGY TO TEACHING	143	25	1	126	40	2
THE COURSE HELPED IN FIELD WORK AS A STUDENT TEACHER	136	29	4	125	39	0

*The nature of the questionnaire was such that all students did not respond to every question.

3. Ninety percent indicated that the methods instructors' ability and willingness to incorporate actual and current illustrations from their daily teaching into the methods course lectures contributed greatly to the effectiveness of the courses.
4. Eighty-three percent indicated that the experience of observing the methods instructor as he worked with elementary school children contributed greatly to the effectiveness of the courses.

Open-ended comments written voluntarily by the students supported the data collected from the Student Questionnaires. The following statements are representative of many that were made:

> The instructor who is a practicing elementary teacher can provide practical and realistic guidance for beginning teachers because he is not far removed from the classroom situation.
>
> I think having a methods instructor serve as a teacher in the elementary school is extremely important. These instructors seem to be far more aware of current trends, materials, and children.
>
> When other instructors tell us about their "experiences" teaching elementary school, we have to take their word for it. This way we can actually see what is going on.

Of the sixty-five Questionnaires for Public School Teachers that were distributed, thirty-five were returned, and thirty-two of these were completed in their entirety. On the basis of their experiences in supervising the practice teaching of the students enrolled in the clinical professors' courses, twenty of the cooperating teachers felt that the approach had great potential and should be explored further, eleven considered the approach to be of about the same worth as the usual methods courses, and one indicated that the approach was less effective than the usual approach to methods instruction.

As a result of the participating instructors' subjective evaluation of the clinical professor approach to methods instruction, three strengths were identified. These strengths were:

1. The methods courses were stimulating for students because actual teaching illustrations were used.
2. The methods courses were realistic and practical because the instructors were obliged to "practice what they preached."
3. The theory discussed in the methods courses became alive and meaningful because the instructors followed their lectures with demonstrations in the elementary classroom.

In addition to the strengths, however, the instructors' observations throughout the study also resulted in the identification of two problems. These problems are:

1. *The clinical professor's load.* While the physical strain of simultaneously teaching elementary school classes and college methods courses makes it imperative that clinical professors be given a reasonable contact hour load, it is difficult for administrators to equate the clinical professor's load with that of the regular college instructor.
2. *The recruitment of clinical professors.* The experience of the writers indicates that obtaining competent clinical professors from among the members of a college faculty may be a problem for two reasons. First, many education professors appear to be reluctant to return to the classroom to teach children on a regular basis. Second, the increasing pressure to do research and to publish appears to lead many potential clinical professors to the conclusion that professional reward

is more readily realized from the pursuance of scholarly activities than from the teaching of children and undergraduates.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has provided evidence to support the contention that the clinical professor approach to methods instruction is a vital and powerful one which holds great potential for increasing the understanding and teaching competency of undergraduates preparing to teach. As such, the approach described herein deserves further concentrated and structured study.

However, the experience of the writers further indicates that two realities must be faced by institutions wishing to explore this type of clinical professor approach in greater depth. These are:

1. The rigorous demands placed upon a clinical professor must be carefully considered, and college professors assuming such a role must be provided with realistic teaching loads.
2. The necessity for adjustments related to the recruitment and subsequent reward of the college professors who are to serve as clinical professors must be recognized and appropriate changes made, especially in view of the pressure upon teacher-training institutions to emphasize research and publishing.

Both the evidence cited in this report and the experience gained in serving as clinical professors lead the writers to conclude that these problems must be resolved and the way cleared for a wider acceptance of the clinical professor approach to methods instruction. As professionals responsible for the education of teachers, we cannot afford to ignore an approach demonstrating such potential for improving teacher education.

REFERENCES

1. Lemons, Lawrence A. "Education Courses: Opinions Differ on Their Value." *NEA Journal* 54:27; October, 1965.
2. Goodlad, John I. "An Analysis of Professional Laboratory Experiences in the Education of Teachers." *Journal of Teacher Education* 16:226; September, 1965.
3. Koerner, James D. *The Miseducation of American Teachers.* Boston: Houghton Miflin Company, 1963.
4. Conant, James B. *The Education of American Teachers.* New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1963.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.